

Congresswoman Kosmas Fights for Florida's Share of Education Dollars

Leads Bipartisan Florida Delegation in Letter to Education Secretary

(Orlando, FL) - Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) led a bipartisan group of members from Florida's congressional delegation in sending a letter urging Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to waive requirements and allow Florida to receive important education funding included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The tax relief and recovery package includes a \$2.7 billion state stabilization fund to help fill the gap in Florida's education budget. To receive these funds states must meet a "Maintenance of Effort" (MOE) requirement that education spending be at 2006 levels. Florida currently does not meet this requirement. However, the bill contains a provision that allows the Department of Education to waive the MOE requirement for states like Florida who have been hit hard by the recession. Congresswoman Kosmas, working with Florida members from both parties, is urging the Secretary of Education to grant Florida this waiver.

"Florida is facing a growing budget crisis and our schools are paying the price," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "The tax relief and recovery package includes critical education funding that will keep schools open and protect teachers' jobs so our children can get the education they need to compete in the 21st Century. I urge Secretary Duncan to grant Florida a waiver and to give our state access to these funds as soon as possible."

Support for waiving the requirement is strong among both parties. Nine Democrats and nine Republicans from the Florida delegation signed on to Kosmas' letter, highlighting the urgency of Florida's education funding shortfall.

"Florida's education crisis goes beyond partisanship and I am honored that my colleagues from both parties have joined me in advocating for this important issue," said Kosmas. "We will work together to ensure that the Department of Education waives arbitrary requirements and guarantees Florida its fair share."

The full text of the letter can be found below:

Dear Secretary Duncan,

We strongly urge you to grant the State of Florida a waiver as provided in H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to allow the State access to critical education funding through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

In 2006, the Florida Education Finance Program reached a funding level of \$9.6 billion, but declining state revenues have led to a \$1.2 billion reduction in K-12 education spending since that time. As you know, a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) provision in H.R.1 requires that a state maintain its share of spending of K-12 education at the Fiscal Year 2006 level during Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010 to be eligible for its share of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, unless a waiver is granted. Due partially to a severe drop in State resources and a decrease in student enrollment, Florida is currently short of the FY 2006 level. This means the State fails to meet the MOE requirement and stands to lose an estimated \$2.7 billion made available through this fund.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides you with the authority to waive this requirement in cases of hardship. We urge you to use this waiver authority to ensure Florida's children, teachers, and schools receive their fair share of these resources.

This critical funding is vital to protecting our schools from budget cuts and teacher layoffs. Because Florida has been hit especially hard by a rise in foreclosures, unemployment, and recent natural disasters, we are experiencing a crippling budget crisis. Now more than ever, we must invest in our state's future.

Florida's investment in education has already yielded positive results and recognition. Education Week ranks Florida as 10th in the nation for "overall quality of education." These funds are essential to providing the high standard of public education that our children deserve.

We strongly encourage you to exercise your prerogative as Secretary of Education to help ensure Florida's 3.2 million students continue to receive adequate education funding for a bright future.

Thank you for your attention and we respectfully await your action.

Yours Sincerely,

Suzanne Kosmas

Adam Putnam

Ron Klein

Alcee Hastings

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Robert Wexler

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Lincoln Diaz-Balart

Tom Rooney

Corrine Brown

Kathy Castor

Kendrick Meek

Alan Grayson

Mario Diaz-Balart

Ginny Brown-Waite

Cliff Stearns

John Mica

Bill Posey

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